المجلس الإسلامي
Islamic Council

PRESS STATEMENT
by Mr SALEM AZZAM
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I am very pleased to be in Sudan and thank you all for attending this press meeting.

Firstly, I wish to congratulate the people of Sudan on their success in ending the dictatorial rule under which they had suffered for long years.

I also wish to pay tribute and offer my felicitations to His Excellency General Abdul Rahman Swar al Dahab and his colleagues for responding to the wishes of the people and acting with courage and decisiveness to put an end to that despotic regime.

Despotism, as is well known, has absolutely no place in Islam. The Islamic Council is strongly opposed to despotic regimes in all Muslim countries, and stands for democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. Accordingly, the Council has raised its voice against autocratic regimes and suppression of human rights whenever and wherever it has found them. We did this also in the case of the regime which you have now toppled. The Council firmly believes that it is only in an environment of democracy, rule of law, social justice and respect for human rights that the talents and genius of a people can flower and flourish, and they can make sustained progress in the various walks of

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life. No nation, as history testifies, has ever realised its full potential and lived a happy and contented life under a despotic rule.

I sincerely hope and pray that the change which the people of Sudan have brought about will usher in an era of stability, democracy, respect for human rights, and all round economic and social progress.

Unfortunately, these days Sudan is in the midst of hard times. A severe famine, the result of several years of drought, is threatening the lives of millions of people. The severity of the problem is aggravated by the influx of over one million refugees into the country. This problem must be tackled on an emergency basis if a major human tragedy is to be avoided.

It is a well known fact that right now the world food stocks are more than sufficient to feed the entire world population. I, therefore, appeal to the governments of industrialised countries, most of whom are known to have surplus food stocks, to the governments of oil-rich Arab countries and to Muslim individuals whom God has blessed with riches far beyond their needs, to come to the aid of the starving millions in Sudan today. I hope that political, racial or religious consideration will not prevent them from helping in this purely humanitarian cause.

Not withstanding the many serious problems confronting it today, Sudan is basically a country of immense potential. It is the largest country in Africa; it is not burdened with over population; its people are

intelligent and peace-loving; it has large untapped natural resources. All it needs to exploit these is investment capital.

It is indeed sad that so far the investment capital needed by Sudan has not been provided to it by the Muslim states which are in a position to do so. I am referring, as you can guess, to oil-producing Arab countries. It pains me to see that, whereas these states are virtually floating on seas of oil, a Sudanese has to queue up all night for a litre of petrol or for a little kerosene with which to cook his meal. It is sad that, whereas millions of gallons of oil are being wasted every day in fighting a fratricidal war, none can be spared for Sudan. It is tragic that, while some Muslim governments have no difficulty in finding thousands of millions of dollars to finance the war in the Gulf, they have not so far provided more than token aid to the starving millions in Sudan - a tiny percentage compared to their spending on the war.

Is it not ironic that the God-given wealth is being used by some governments in the Muslim world not to save lives threatened by famine and disease but to destroy them on a huge scale, in addition to creating armies of widows and orphans?

This sad situation must change. I appeal to the affluent Muslim countries, particularly the oil-rich Arab states, to establish without delay a special fund of at least two billion dollars (the equivalent of less than 4% of the aid given to finance the Gulf war) for the economic and social development of Sudan.

Lastly, having struggled and succeeded in removing a dictatorial regime, I sincerely hope and pray that Sudan will now see the establishment of a genuine democracy and not merely the veneer of democracy which some regimes use to cover their most autocratic policies and practices, one even claiming democracy while governing under emergency laws.

We hope and pray to see a real Islamic state, based on shura, on respect for human rights, on social justice and on brotherhood and cooperation and on an Islamic moral code. We hope to see a new era in Sudan, which will set a good example to Muslims the world over.

May God bless you.